



Safeguarding News



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Parental Controls

Now that we are getting back to some kind of normality, I thought we should restart the monthly newsletter which looks at safeguarding and usually includes lots of advice on keeping your children safe on-line. I can imagine that children have received lots of expensive new gaming devices and phones both during and after lock-down. There are so many connected devices on the market now, each with their own unique way of setting up parental controls and restrictions. Equally, the functionality of these devices can be daunting with chat, game downloads, in-app purchases, third party apps on the devices (such as social media, Netflix) etc. This can be a puzzle to lots of us! If you need help setting up controls on any device you can look up the device on YouTube using a simple 'how to' query, e.g. 'how to restrict in-app purchases on Playstation 5'.



The tech-savvy people at Internet Matters also have a one-stop shop for setting up devices which can be found here:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/>

Or remember, on the school website there are guides for setting parental controls on any new devices. Please use one of the above, especially if you aren't sure what you need to put in place to keep them safe!





Video Games and Mental Health



Video games are a normal part of modern family life and can engage our children in all manner of topics and activities. From education to deep thinking, or even just the resilience of trying again when they fail, most parents appreciate having games in the home. As with any part of childhood though, things don't always go smoothly for everyone. Because video games are new and fast-changing media, it can be hard to find the resources or have the knowledge to keep things on the straight and narrow.

Therefore it's important to pay attention to how children are balancing video games in their lives. Questions like these are useful to consider:

- Is my child physically healthy and sleeping enough?
- Is my child connecting socially with family and friends?
- Is my child engaged with and achieving in school?
- Is my child pursuing interests and hobbies?
- Is my child having fun and learning in their use of digital media?



Gameplay and emotions

When children play on their own, or for too long, this can affect their mood and mental state. Frustration, not wanting to stop or even anger can be symptoms we notice in our children when they have been playing.

Although it's an understandable cause of parental concern, it's important to know that these things on their own aren't a sign of addiction. You don't need to panic if your child is increasingly angry when they play games, but you do need to pay attention to what is the cause of this frustration. If you notice these effects it's important that you create time to enjoy games together. Playing the game with your child (or watching them play) is a good first step to better understanding their gaming mood. Keep an eye out for how they use gaming. Is it to relax after a busy day at school? Is it to connect with friends? Is it to escape other stresses in their life? Is it to excel at something or gain social status? Is it that they enjoy the sense of expertise?

This can help you carefully separate cause and effect. For some children, it can be the intensity and pressure to compete in the game itself that triggers their behaviour. But equally, their gaming behaviour may be a symptom of other pressures in their life. Understanding this helps you guide them to better behaviour without blaming, limiting or banning games. If they are using games as a coping strategy, removing them can make things worse.

Finding a wider range of games to play together can help them find different ways of benefiting from the games they play. Particularly younger children will gravitate towards the more exuberant or exciting games. Introducing calming games can enable them to enjoy their hobby with a different state of mind.

If, after playing together and suggesting different games, your child still exhibits difficult behaviour during or after play, introducing some limits can help. Try using automatic timer settings to do this and discuss timings with your child– this may help them feel empowered, while still following your limits.

SAFEGUARDING REMINDERS

As always, keeping our children safe online is vitally important and taking the steps outlined above will help you to do so. Remember if you wish to discuss anything regarding safeguarding then please use our email address headteacher@stjamesacademy.co.uk or contact Miss Minor our Designated Safeguarding Lead at the Academy. You can also contact members of the Safeguarding Team: Mrs Lloyd, Mrs Dent, Mrs McCarthy or Mrs Butterworth with regards to this.

